CHOOSING WELLNESS:

an approach to healthy aging

Province of British Columbia
Ministry of Health
Community and Family Health

90-03507/

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Main entry under title:
Choosing wellness

ISBN 0-7726-0822-9

1. Health promotion – British Columbia. 2. Aged – Health and hygiene – British Columbia. I. British Columbia. Community and Family Health.

RA777.6.C464 1988 613'.0438 C88-092121-8

This book is dedicated to wellness and to the men and women who, in increasing numbers, are discovering that they themselves hold the key to a rich, full and marvellous life.

The Ministry of Health acknowledges the community of New Westminster for its enthusiastic support and participation in the development of the Choosing Wellness *program.*

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"But where was I to start? The world is so vast, I shall start with the country I know best, my own. But my country is so large. I had better start with my town. But my town, too, is large. I had best start with my street. No: my home. No: my family. Never mind, I shall start with myself."

Elie Wiesel

Foreword

As a result of better nutrition, health care and living conditions, older adults now represent the fastest growing segment of the population.

These men and women, in increasing numbers, are not content simply to live longer: they want to live well. And they're doing something about it.

The emphasis has shifted. Instead of focusing on the care and treatment of established disease and degeneration, these people are choosing to cultivate wellness, adopting actions and attitudes that will help them maintain their independence, physical mobility, interest in living, and self-esteem. They are also reaching out beyond themselves to help others and the communities in which they live.

They are breaking new ground. They are finding an approach to aging quite different from that in the past.

This book, which is one component of the *Choosing Wellness* program, has been written to help older adults achieve and maintain a sense of well-being so stimulating and invigorating it previously may have been thought impossible. The approach to healthy aging described here is based on the premise and belief that by following some simple strategies, it is possible to live a longer, happier life. In addition to offering concrete suggestions, *Choosing Wellness* provides information that can help you deal with many common concerns about health and lifestyle changes.

Many adults who are coping with an illness or with the trauma of moving, retirement or widowhood have

found this guide helpful. Some who said they "didn't have to feel sick to want to feel better" found they benefitted from increased energy and vigor by adopting the strategies outlined.

What has happened for others, can happen for you.

Follow the book's suggestions on your own, or look for a *Choosing Wellness* group in your community.

By picking up this book, you've taken an important step toward a life of wellness. The next step is to read it through. Then re-read it, incorporating into your life the new health habits and attitudes described.

These techniques work. All that is necessary is for you to make a choice:

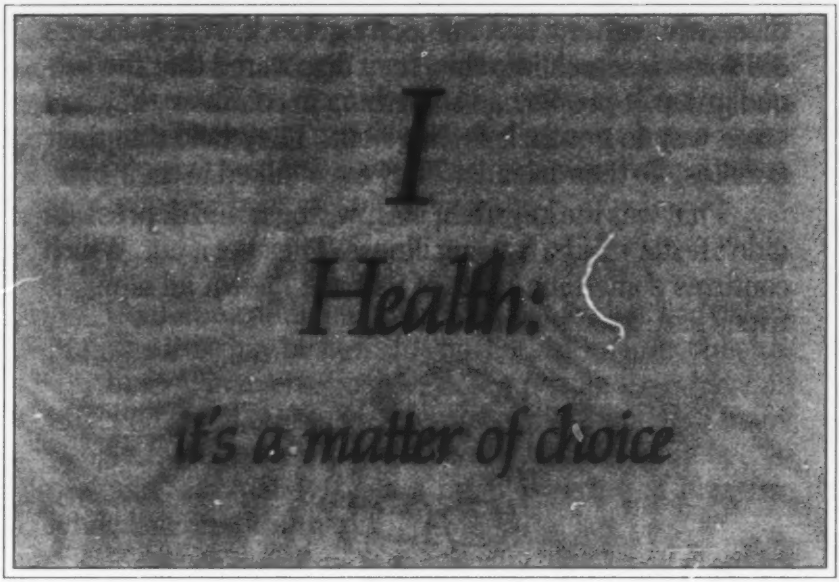
for you to choose wellness.

"For as I like a young man in whom there is something of the old, so I like an old man in whom there is something of the young; and he who follows this maxim, in body will possibly be an old man, but he will never be an old man in mind."

Marcus Tullius Cicero

"Something we were withholding made us weak. Until we found it was ourselves."

Robert Frost



Friends are good medicine

All of life is about changing and growing. The transitions of retirement, moving out of the family home and widowhood are common to all and they can be tough challenges to meet. They can bring deep feelings of loss, loneliness and depression, feelings and thoughts which threaten to defeat us - unless we defeat them.

It's important to realize that all the feelings you experience after a loss are normal and to be expected. These feelings are part of the body's natural healing process. Time, gentleness and the right amount of support helps most people to move on to understand and accept a loss.

But 'moving on' can be easier said than done. Often it seems that people who've experienced a loss are more likely to get ill than people who haven't. Yet there are

those who suffer a loss and don't get sick. When doctors did some research into this, they discovered that the second group of people had something in common: they had some way to get their feelings out. They talked to their families. To their friends. They even talked to their pets.

That was the key: their sorrow, anger and depression didn't fester inside, causing illness. They got it out. Which confirms something most of us have known all along... friends are good medicine.

Many people who've decided to "choose wellness" and follow this alternative route through aging have few or no friends when they begin. But their willingness to start again, their positive thoughts about finding and cultivating new friends, have brought many rewards, including new friendships.

So when the time feels right for you, start anew. Be open to new people, places, ideas and experiences. Join a seniors' network or centre or just get out and go to meetings or concerts in your community. And don't be afraid to introduce yourself. Other people often feel just as lonely as you do.

If ill health compounds your loneliness, making it difficult for you to get out to meet people, have them come to you. Every community has groups willing to help. Call one. Their help can take many forms, such as a phone call frequently to see how you are or a visit from a volunteer whose sole interest is in helping.

Listen well and find a new world

Communication has two sides - speaking and listening - and this may be news to you: both sides affect health.

In fact, conversations between people even have an effect on blood pressure. Scientists have found that many people experience a rise in blood pressure while speaking, and, alternately, have a rapid lowering of pressure while listening to others.

However, people with chronically high blood pressure may listen in a way that does *not* result in a drop in pressure. And the reason is, they don't really listen. They tend to interrupt and speak over other people.

Listening affects health and wellness in an indirect way too, because it's one of the most powerful gifts one person can give another. Taking time to listen to someone acknowledges their worth. Although counsellors, ministers, doctors and nurses all have a listening role to play, any one of us can do a whole lot as supportive friends and neighbours, if we just take the time to listen.

Some ways of listening don't work. They get your blood pressure up and leave the person who's talking feeling frustrated, hurt and possibly with their blood pressure rising, too.

Ways *not* to listen include:

- judging the person's message;
- jumping to conclusions;

- assuming that others think as you do;
- hearing just what you want to;
- being afraid that others are challenging your beliefs.

The listening strategies that do work are simple - and marvellous in their effect:

- look the speaker right in the eye;
- ask questions when you don't understand;
- rephrase what the person has said to make sure you understood it;
- give the person your undivided attention.

Just imagine, for a moment, how wonderful it would be if everybody listened that way! Start a chain reaction: become a good listener yourself, and see what happens.

A hearing loss can cause listening problems and needs special attention.

One person in five over the age of 65 has lost some ability to hear. It's especially common in men. This is a

gradual process and the hearing loss may not be noticed for quite some while.

The symptoms of hearing loss, in addition to not hearing as well as before, may be dizziness, pain, drainage or buzzing in the ear. Some people may hear many sounds just as loudly as before, but have trouble understanding speech. Some may also have trouble hearing the ring of the telephone or doorbell, soprano or children's voices, or fire sirens. However, there are things you can do to avoid the frustration and isolation that hearing loss can bring.

If you think you have a hearing problem, the first step is to talk to your family doctor. Your doctor may refer you to an ear and/or hearing specialist to investigate possible diseases of the ear and the effect the hearing problem has on day-to-day communications.

The specialist may recommend a hearing aid. If you choose this option, be sure it's selected and fitted by a qualified person. And when you first wear it, be patient. It takes time and practice to learn to use it properly. You can also consider installing a sound amplifier on your telephone. Remember, hearing aids aren't signs of age: they're signs of people actively choosing to keep themselves part of what's going on: part of life.

If you have a problem, hearing can be enhanced by watching the face of the speaker. Combining what you hear with what you see can help you to better understand the message.

Speak up

To enjoy better health, we all have to be willing to speak up and let our opinions be known. If we don't, it can lead to distress and possibly illness.

Part of wellness is acknowledging that when it comes to yourself and your opinions, you're the expert. Trust your intuition. As your own expert, you have a responsibility to express your thoughts and feelings, in a pleasant and constructive manner.

If you don't express your needs, or you let your rights be ignored, or you let someone else make decisions for you that you'd like to make yourself, you're acting unassertively. And as a result, you think less of yourself, feel humiliated at times, feel helpless and bitter because you're not saying or getting what you want. All because you didn't speak up.

The art of 'speaking up' effectively is called assertiveness.

When you act assertively, you act in your own interest, according to your own values. You stand up for yourself and express your opinions, feelings and attitudes honestly, without feeling guilty and without being unduly nervous. Importantly, you don't diminish anyone else by the way you do it.

The key is to learn how to describe your feelings. In an assertive conversation, you state clearly what you're feeling, ask the other person how they feel about the subject (listening well), and work toward a mutual solution.

Being assertive is frequently confused with being aggressive. The two couldn't be more different.

When you act aggressively, you use hostile words or actions that force others to give in to what you want. An

aggressive person is very concerned with "winning". But the price of winning can be high. Violating another's rights through aggressive behavior can result in others responding with dislike and even hostility. Aggressive people are always finding themselves in arguments - or avoided altogether.

You can cultivate positive assertiveness in yourself. There's a little trick, called The Assertive Bill of Rights,* that can help you do it.

Whenever you feel you're letting yourself be pushed around, remember The Bill of Rights and say it to yourself. Or carry it around with you and pull it out and read it to yourself right there and then.

* *Adapted from: Ryan, R.S. & Travis, J., The Wellness Workbook, Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1981*

The Assertive Bill of Rights

I have the right...

- to be responsible for my own life.
- to respect myself and others.
- to feel happy and to maintain inner peace.
- to take good care of my body, mind and spirit.
- to make mistakes and be responsible for them.
- to be aware of and fulfill my needs.
- to have dreams and to make them happen.
- to express my emotions.
- to tell others how I want to be treated.
- to accept help and not feel guilty.
- to set priorities about my use of time.
- to get what I pay for.
- to have friendships where honesty is valued.
- to grow in new directions.
- to maintain my values without apology to anyone.
- to live in the present moment.
- to relax, to let go, to "do" nothing.

Doesn't that feel terrific? And you know, the wonderful thing is it's all true.

Put 'mind power' to work

Until recently, it was believed that illness was either caused by straightforward, physical problems - or it was imaginary. But today we know that's not so. What we know now is that illness, *real* illness, can be caused or made worse by the mind! Even heart disease and cancer can be aggravated by a person's negative mental state.

But there's a flip side to this coin. Just as the mind can cause or worsen illness, so the mind can prevent illness

and alleviate symptoms and suffering! How's that for an alternative approach! And it's true.

This doesn't mean that we can totally eliminate illness from our lives. And we can't stop the clock of aging. Each of us is destined to see wrinkles looking back at us in the mirror. Each of us will experience our share of sickness and pain. But what we can do, by putting the power of our minds to work, is control whether or not illness affects our whole lives.

Once you realize how much your mind can affect your physical well-being, you're in a position to use it to lead you to wellness.

In many cases, you can actually produce changes in your health by changing your thought patterns. For example, doctors who work with cancer patients are finding that the body's immune system can be strengthened when the mind is focused on positive thinking.

People who have experienced life-threatening heart attacks are learning that positive emotions, coupled with diet and exercise, greatly influence the recovery process. It may sound like magic, but it's certainly magic of the best kind.

Create a healthy body-mind environment by maintaining a positive picture of yourself and you create an opportunity for wellness to take root and grow.

What you do is "will" it to happen.

When we have a clear mental picture of what we want to happen, we convince ourselves that it really will happen, and automatically we start to behave in ways that make it happen. The secret is to act as if what you wish for has already happened.

See, in your mind's eye, a picture of the thing you want. For instance, you might wish you had more energy. "See" yourself in your mind the way you'd look and feel with more energy. Then develop a sentence that you can repeat to yourself affirming what you want. You'll see: it does work.

You'll want to make up your own affirmations (positive statements of what you want to happen) but here are some that give you an idea of affirmations you can put to work for you.

- "Every day I am increasing my energy."
- "I am enjoying working at my new job at the seniors' centre." (Try that one *before* you have the job and see what happens!)
- "I am confident about the decisions I make."

There's power in a statement that starts with "I am" and ends with a positive. Put that power to work for you.

The first step in getting to where you want to be is to draw up a plan.

To improve your health or lifestyle, set a goal, make a plan, and then stick to it. The SMART checklist can be a guide to good and effective goal-setting and plan-making. It was devised by the Healthstyles Program in Ottawa.

S pecific:	Is your goal specific? Do you know when, how, where, with whom and how long you will do this?
M easurable:	Is it measurable? Will you know when it is done?
A cceptable:	Will you feel good about doing this?
R ealistic:	Are you really able to do this?
T ruthful:	Do you really want to do this?

When your goal and plan meet all these criteria, you're ready to get going. And friends, neighbours and relatives can all provide support to help you succeed.

Strive for excellence.

Always remember: getting older doesn't mean you have to settle for second best. Dedicate yourself to living each day to the fullest and make a conscious commitment to your own wellness and that of the community. You'll be amazed at how much strength there is in working together to keep active and well.

Positive thoughts can be used in hundreds of ways - to increase your energy, help you meet new people, diminish the impact of a physical problem on your life, bring you a new feeling of wellness.

Begin with one change you'd like to see in you life. Make your plan. Tell others what you're up to and get their support. Concentrate on reaching that goal. After all, what have you got to lose?

The Health Care system: use it wisely

Just as it's important to know what to do to maintain your health and to achieve wellness, so it's good to know how to use the health care system wisely when you need it. A key in dealing with your own health care is to be involved and take an active role in decisions.

Begin by taking responsibility for the following:

- Know your health history - write it down.
- Choose a healthy lifestyle.
- Keep your own health records.
- Recognize the signs and symptoms that suggest a problem.
- Work with your doctor, in partnership.

It is important to have a doctor with whom you can communicate. If you're choosing a new doctor, here are some ways to conduct a successful search:

- Ask your friends for recommendations.
- Call the College of Physicians and Surgeons for names of doctors who are taking new patients in your neighborhood.
- Call doctors' offices and ask the questions that are important to you - is the doctor interested or trained in working with older adults? What is the policy re: phone calls, home visits, length of office visits, and on-call coverage?
- Ask another doctor or health professional for recommendations.

You should rely on your doctor's knowledge and experience, but you must also give your doctor your co-operation and help. Be sure to mention all the symptoms you've noticed. Try to limit each visit to dealing with your major health concerns. Ask questions and get involved.

A medical visit checklist:

Before visiting your doctor's office, you should know:

What the purpose of your visit is _____

What you expect the doctor to do today _____

_____

What other health concerns you have _____

_____

On leaving the doctor's office, you should know:

All the answers to your health concerns _____

If you are to phone in for test results ____ When? _____
If you are to return for a follow-up visit _ When? _____
Why this problem happened _____

_____

If you can prevent it from recurring _____
How? _____
How it can be treated (list alternatives) _____

_____

What treatment is recommended _____

_____

What you should do or not do at home _____

_____

Diet _____
Exercise _____
Precautions _____

Use medications as directed by your doctor and pharmacist. If taking medicine, be aware:

Of what you are taking _____
Why you are taking it _____
What the expected effects are _____
When you are to take it _____
How you should take it (eg. with water, milk, food) _____

_____

If other foods or drugs will affect it _____
How it should be stored _____
How long you will be taking it _____
If you can get refills _____
If this medication can cause an adverse reaction _____

_____

Medical Services Plan

The mandate of provincial medical insurance is to provide for payment of physician services that are medically required in the management of illness. Please contact your physician or the Medical Services Plan for information regarding your coverage.

Remember, each of us is ultimately responsible for maintaining our own health! To do so, we need to share our lives and feelings with friends, learn to listen well to others and express our feelings clearly, put the power of our minds to work for us. Of course, there's more to wellness than just that: we need to know how to care for our bodies too - and to put into practice what we know.

"Old age comes to most of us as a surprise."

"The challenge is to be true to each stage of life. Old age, too, has a purpose, and we must choose to either sacrifice or actualize it."

Leo F. Buscaglia

We were made to move

The human species is born with a lot of instinctive wisdom. A baby knows he or she needs food and warmth. He knows enough to cry when he wants attention or help. And he knows that to grow and thrive, he must move.

A healthy baby is all action. And so are children: running, jumping, hopping, dancing.

Unfortunately, at some stage most of us toned down all that movement. We were taught to sit still. But if you remember, we did have to be taught. We had to *learn* stillness. Because instinctively we knew: we were made to move.

Regular physical activity is important at all ages. It allows growing children to develop strong muscles and bones and flexible joints, and to increase the efficiency and endurance of the heart, lungs and muscles.

In mature adults, movement helps maintain these things. Movement helps with posture, balance and coordination. It helps maintain the strength of bones. It helps people handle stress, reduces fatigue, promotes better sleep, and provides the person who exercises with a sense of well-being, more vitality and a zest for life.

Physical activity is also an end in itself: there's nothing to compare with the sensuous pleasure of movement.

Although many people are involved in some physical activity each day, most of us should do more.

Whatever exercise program you consider, there are important strategies for success. Here are three.

1. Take a sensible approach.

If you are just beginning a program of exercise:

- Talk to your doctor.
- Find a program that is right for you.
- Look for an activity you find convenient and enjoyable.
- Begin slowly.
- Wear comfortable clothes and appropriate footwear.
- Listen to your body: pain is a signal to ease up. If you are tired, gradually stop.
- Resist the temptation to compare yourself to others.
- Surround yourself with supporters.

2. Develop a well-rounded program.

A complete exercise program requires three basic types of activity:

- Stretching exercises
  Regular stretching is necessary for maintaining healthy joints and muscles. It helps to prevent injury and muscle soreness. Stretching exercises should be done slowly and smoothly - never bounce.
  Proper breathing, exhaling slowly as you stretch, is an important companion to stretching, because it helps you relax.

- Strengthening exercises
  Strengthening exercises help to maintain muscle condition. Strong muscles will help you move with grace and without fatigue. Repetitions of gentle

movements can build both strength and endurance. Proper breathing is important. Remember to breathe out as you exert yourself.

- Aerobic exercises

  Aerobic exercise stimulates the heart, lungs and muscles. An efficient cardiopulmonary system helps you to carry out your daily tasks more easily, leaving you feeling less fatigued and with increased energy. Aerobic exercise also helps in maintaining your weight.

  The key to aerobic exercise is continuous activity (such as walking) for a minimum of 20 minutes. In this *Choosing Wellness* book we've included a brisk walking program tailored to suit people with various levels of fitness. You'll find the program on page 47.

3. Have fun.

   It's important to select an activity that you enjoy. Research and experience have proven that you are more likely to continue to participate if it's fun.

The T'ai Chi Opener

T'ai Chi is a form of martial arts developed in China thousands of years ago. It has over 100 basic postures and is practised daily by hundreds of thousands of people in the Far East. The movements are graceful and unite body, mind and spirit.

The T'ai Chi Opener is used in *Choosing Wellness* Workshops because this soft, creative movement form can be used daily as:

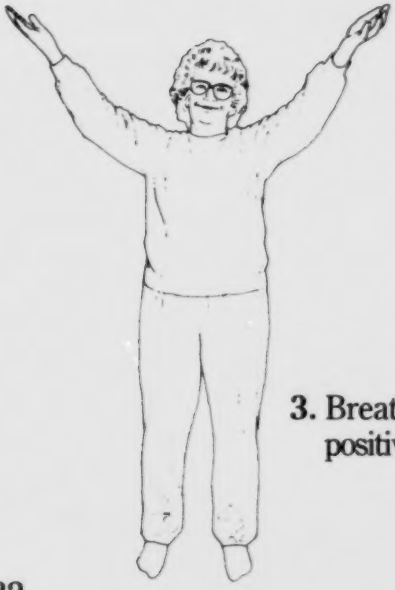
- a physical warm-up
- a relaxation technique that focuses on breathing and movement and quiets the mind
- an affirmation

If you find you enjoy the T'ai Chi Opener, you may want to learn more T'ai Chi. Classes are available in many communities.

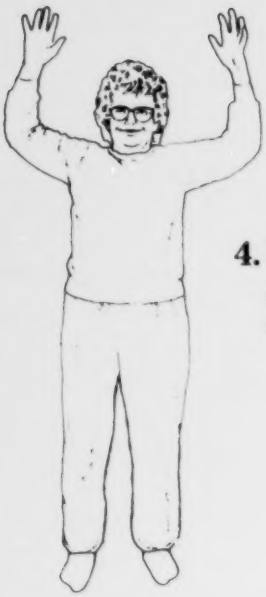
To begin the T'ai Chi Opener, stand naturally and relaxed, feet under hips, knees slightly bent. Breathe gently and fully. Feel the floor supporting you.

1. Breathe in as you let your arms float to shoulder height in front of you.

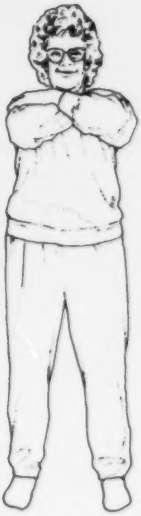
2. Breathe out as palms press aside negativity and arms move to the side.



3. Breathe in as palms create an arch of positivity and arms rise over your head.



4. Breathe out as your arms glide around and in front. Spread good thoughts to others all around.



5. Breathe in as arms hug your body bringing in all that you need.

6. Breathe out as your arms spread energy and health throughout your entire being as they descend to waist level.

Exercise for active relaxation

The following exercises can be done as part of a daily routine. They are designed to help keep you supple and maintain muscle tone. Add a brisk walk and you will have a complete fitness program.

Sit tall in a chair with the small of your back pressed to the back rest. Plant your feet firmly on the floor.

Exercise #1: Head and Neck

1. Lower your chin to your chest slowly. Slowly lift it up - do not tilt head back. Repeat 4 times.

2. Turn your head to look over your shoulder. Turn it to look over the other shoulder. Keep the movement slow and smooth. Repeat 4 times.

3. Slowly tilt your ear to your shoulder. Feel the stretch on the opposite side of the neck. Repeat 4 times each side.

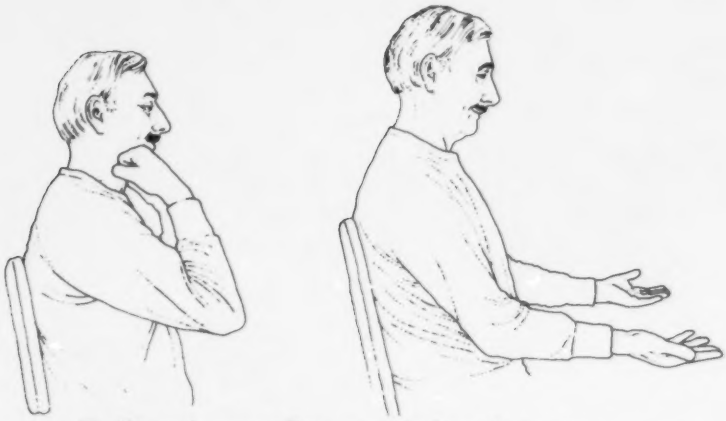
Exercise #2: Shoulders and Arms

1. Lift one shoulder up to your ear. Gently lower it. Repeat 4 times.

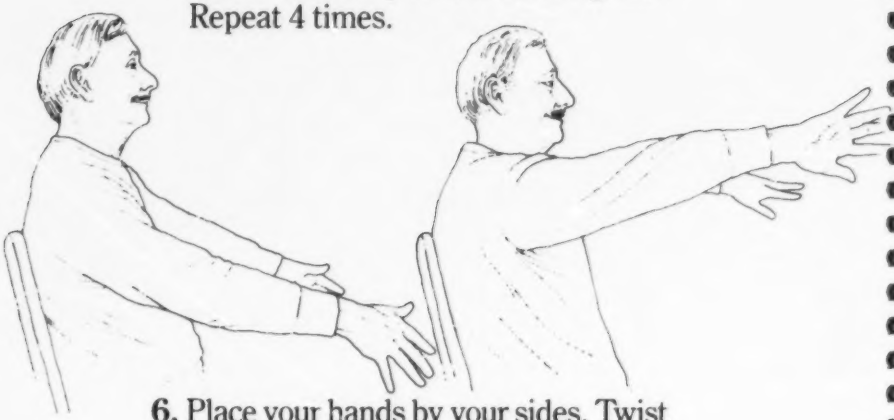
2. Place your finger tips on your shoulders. Gently roll your shoulders, alternating sides. Repeat 4 times on each side. Switch directions.

3. Reach across your body and, with your right hand, pat your left shoulder. Gently pull your elbow towards your face. Feel the stretch in the back of the upper arm and shoulder. Hold. Repeat the stretch on the other side. With your right hand, reach your hand over your right shoulder and down your backbone. Feel the stretch in the armpit area. Repeat the stretch on the other side.

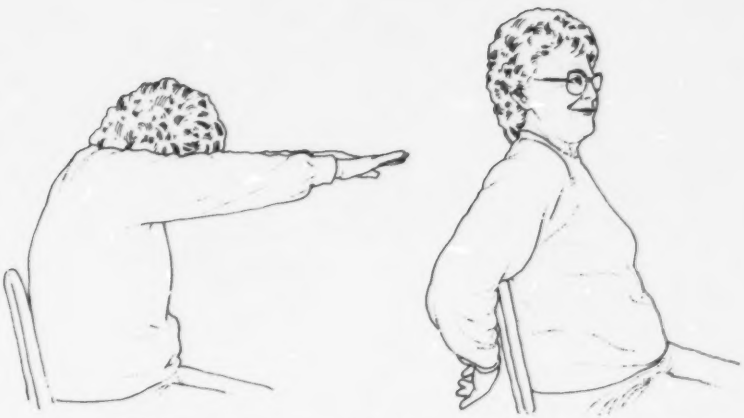
4. Roll your wrists in both directions. Continue until the kinks are worked out.



5. Clench your fists and bring them up to your shoulders (breathing out as you do so). Release and stretch your palms out as you bring your arms down beside you (breathing in). Repeat 4 times.



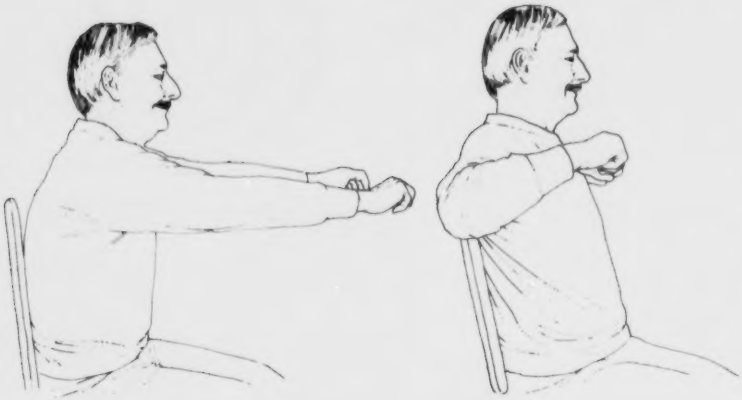
6. Place your hands by your sides. Twist your hands back and forth as if you were twisting sticky door knobs. Keep twisting your hands and arms and lift your arms slowly up in front of you. Bring them down to your sides. Repeat.



7. Imagine you are diving into a pool. Hold the stretch for the upper back. Release and bring the arms behind the back. Tilt your pelvis and gently pull your shoulders back.

Exercise #3: Hips and Abdomen

1. *Hip Circles* - Rock onto your right hip, then to the lower back, then to your left hip and, finally, rock forward. Continue at your own pace making a complete hip circle. Reverse direction.



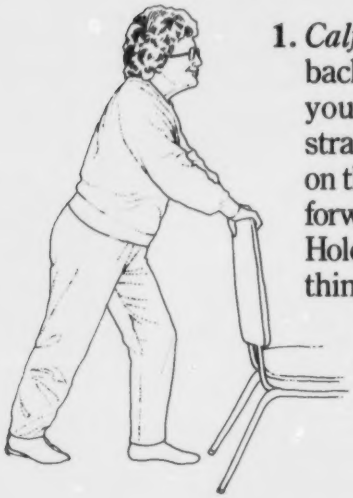
2. *Row a boat* - Reach out in front with your hands as if you were rowing a boat (breathing out). Pull back and tighten your stomach muscles (breathing in). Keep rowing until you are across the stream.

Exercise #4: Pelvic Floor

1. To find the pelvic muscles you use for this exercise, you may want to stop and start midstream when emptying your bladder.
2. Now, imagine you are on the elevator going from the basement to the 10th floor of a building. Contract your pelvic muscles a little at a time, tightening them at each floor until you reach the 10th floor. Descend and gradually release your muscles. By the time you reach the basement again, you should be back to normal muscle tension.

Exercise #5: Trunk and Legs

Stand near a chair for these exercises.

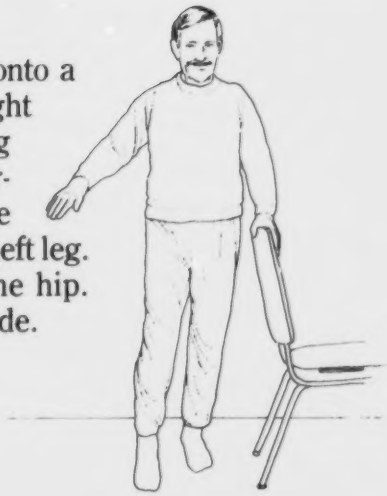


1. *Calf Stretches* - Holding onto the back of a chair, step forward with your left leg. Your right leg is straight behind you with the heel on the floor. Both feet are pointing forward. Slowly bend the left knee. Hold for five seconds. Do the same thing with the other leg in front. Repeat 4 times. Shake your legs out after each stretch.

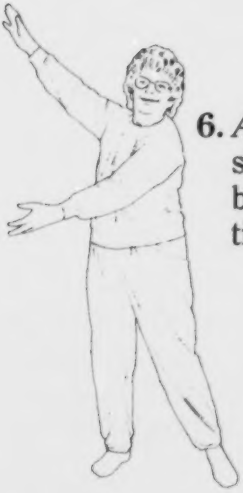
2. *Achilles Stretches* - Take a little step forward. Slowly bend both knees keeping both heels on the floor. Hold five seconds and release. Repeat with the other leg in front. Repeat 4 times.

3. *Side Leg Raises* - Hold onto a chair. With your back erect, smoothly lift your leg to the side. Lower slowly. Repeat 4 times, each side.

4. *Leg Circles* - Holding onto a chair, stand on your right foot, with your left leg straight and slightly forward off the floor. Make small circles with your left leg. Feel the rotation in the hip. Repeat 4 times, each side.



5. *Side Stretches* - Bending both knees and tilting your pelvis, stretch your arm slowly over your head. Breathe out as you stretch. Repeat 4 times, each side.



6. *Arm Swings* - Stand with your knees slightly bent and swing your arms back and forth. You may wish to keep time to some music you like.

In praise of hands

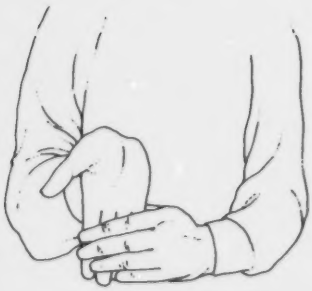
The human hand is a marvel! Hands help people do thousands of small tasks. No matter what our age, we can strengthen them, improve our coordination, and even help relieve arthritic pain - through exercise. The expression "Use it or lose it" applies as much to our hands as to any other part of the body.

Important: Do these exercises slowly and smoothly. Remember to breathe rhythmically and breathe out with the stretch. Begin sitting tall in a comfortable position.

Hand Exercise #1:

Warm-Ups

Rub your hands together vigorously, as if warming them over a fire. Feel the heat?



Hand Exercise #2

Palm Stretch

Hold your hand out with your elbow resting against your side. Breathe in. As you breathe out, gently stretch your palm back with your other hand. Repeat 3 times, gradually deepening the stretch.

Hand Exercise #3

Rub Your Fingers

Take the baby finger of one hand and rub it between the webbing of the little finger and ring finger of your opposite hand. Repeat between each of the other fingers. Now rub the webbings of the other hand. Do your fingers feel more nimble?

Hand Exercise #4

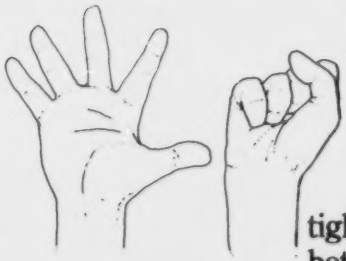
Crumples

Using one hand, crumple up a piece of paper into a tight ball. Then, using the same hand, uncrumple it. You can use anything - a page from a newspaper, a grocery bag, or an envelope for example.

Hand Exercise #5

Wrist Rolls

Imagine you are drawing a circle with your index finger and turn your wrists in a circle.



Hand Exercise #6

Stretches

Hold your hands out in front of you (as if a bank robber said "Hands up"). Stretch your fingers out; then scrunch your fingers into a tight fist. Repeat 4-5 times. Shake both hands and relax.

Walk your way to Wellness

Walking is one of the best forms of aerobic exercise. In a well-developed walking program, you gradually step up your pace, increase your distance and walk more often. To help you get the most out of walking, follow these steps.

- Walk steadily and briskly.
- Breathe deeply through your nose or mouth, whichever is more comfortable.
- As long as you can carry on a conversation without being out of breath, you are walking at a safe pace.
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes that allow you to take long, easy strides. Leave your purse at home (but remember to carry a piece of identification in your pocket).
- Lean forward slightly when walking up hills, and be sure to breath deeply.
- For each step, land on your heel and roll forward to step off the ball of your foot.
- Concentrate on good posture when you walk and keep your head up.

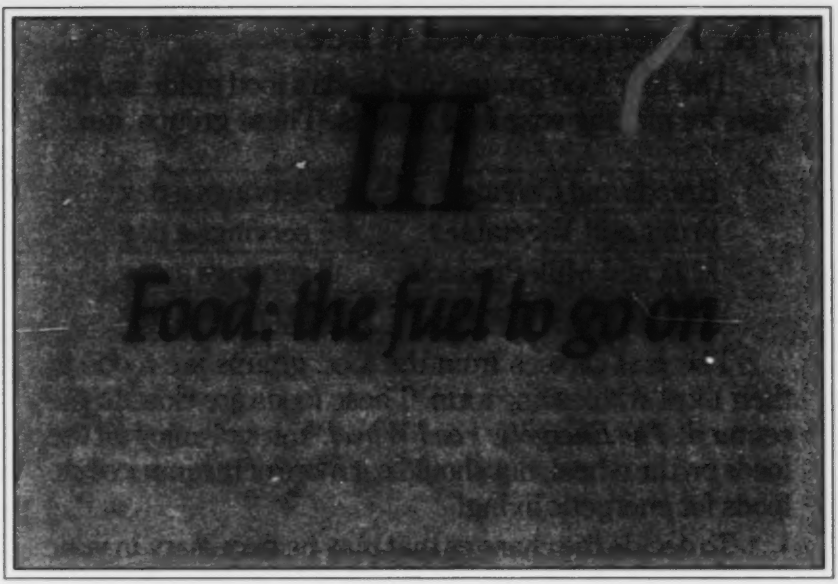
The 10-Week Walking Program is designed to suit different levels of fitness. For example, if you're not walking regularly at the moment, start with Week 1 and for the first week walk one block every other day. Then proceed to Week 2-3. If you're already walking 5 blocks briskly every other day, you will start at Week 4. If you walk more than the 10-week program outlined here, congratulate yourself!

A 10 Week Walking Program

Week	Distance	Frequency	Time
1	1 block	Every other day	Yours!
2-3	2½ blocks	Every other day	Yours!
4	5 blocks	Every other day	Yours!
5	7 blocks	Every other day	Yours!
6	1 Mile (10 blocks)	Every other day	Yours!
7	1 Mile	5 times/week	Yours!
8	1 Mile	5 times/week	20 minutes
9	1½ Miles	5 times/week	30 minutes
10	2 Miles	5 times/week	40 minutes

"Beautiful Soup, so rich and green
Waiting in a hot tureen!
Who for such dainties would not stoop?
Soup of the evening, beautiful soup!"

Mock Turtle's Song
Alice in Wonderland



Food for living

As the human body ages and men and women undergo physical and emotional changes, basic food needs change.

Most older adults, even those who follow a regular exercise routine, are less physically active than they once were. In addition, metabolism slows down. This means that fewer calories are needed to meet energy demands. It's important to recognize and adjust to these changes because calories not burned up to provide energy continue to reside in the body as fat.

Wellness at any age demands a balanced diet. And as we age, an adjustment to the types of foods eaten must be made.

The challenge is to pack all the nutrients that are needed into a smaller total food intake.

The Energetic Food Wheel

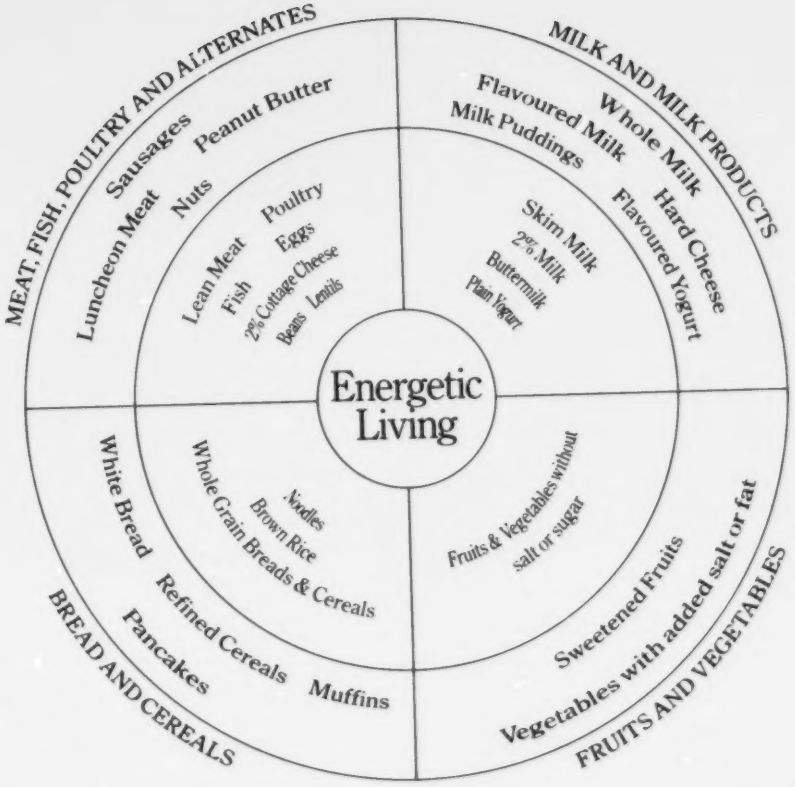
The four food groups in Canada's food guide are the basis for making wise food choices. These groups are:

Breads and Cereals	3-5 servings a day
Fruits and Vegetables	4-5 servings a day
Milk and Milk Products	2 servings a day
Meat and Alternates	2 servings a day

The *best* choices from the food groups are foods in their most wholesome form. These foods are close to the center of *The Energetic Food Wheel.* You can enjoy all the foods on the wheel, but should eat more of the inner circle foods for energetic living!

To decide the changes that may be necessary in your diet, begin with an assessment. Take a moment to recall what you ate in the past day. How close to the centre of the wheel were your food choices? What changes should you make - starting today?

High fat and/or high sugar foods, like donuts, pastry, cake, potato chips and fries don't fit in as energetic food choices. Occasional indulgence is fine, but depend on the food wheel choices to meet your needs for energetic living.



The Energetic Food Wheel

New circumstances don't need to alter good food habits and enjoyable mealtimes.

As the years pass, you may experience significant changes in your living situation. A move, loss of income, or loss of a spouse are examples. Often these changes affect what and how people eat. Having to eat in unfamiliar surroundings, or alone, may lead to skipping meals. You may compensate for the lack of company or conversation with more food than you really need.

It's a matter of understanding how important the right diet is to Wellness - and how important Wellness is to the enjoyment of life. Make a point of doing something just for yourself each day: a flower or candle on your table, some soothing dinner music, the wonderful aroma of freshly baked biscuits or a simmering stew. Think back to family meal times. Besides the food, what else was special? A cheery room? Favourite dishes? Discussing your day? You can recreate some of that mealtime atmosphere.

- Consider sharing a meal with your friend or neighbour. Make a pot of soup that's too big for you, and enjoy it and the company.
- Always set your table and sit down to eat. Take a few minutes to relax before you start.
- Pack your lunch and picnic in a nearby park. A walk and fresh air can do wonders for your appetite and spirits.
- Check out a new cookbook from your library. Make up your mind to try some new recipes.

- Consider joining others for a hot meal at your local seniors' centre.

Changes in income and access to shopping facilities can make buying food a challenge.

- If your grocery store doesn't offer small portions of meat and produce make a request to the manager.
- Shop with a friend and split larger, more economically packaged foods.
- Buy food in bulk and choose the quantity most suitable for you.
- Shop when your store is not crowded.

Making the most of what you eat

1. Bone Health
   - Calcium is the important nutrient for maintaining healthy bones and nerve function. Dairy products are the best source of calcium.

- Absorption of calcium depends on Vitamin D. In Canada, commercially available fluid milk and powdered milk are fortified with Vitamin D. Take one or the other daily.
- Another good way to get Vitamin D is through sunlight exposure - a good reason to go outdoors for a daily walk.
- If you can't take fluid milk comfortably, try it cooked in a pudding or cream soup.

2. Iron Status
   - When food choices are limited due to poor tolerance, cost, loneliness, iron intake often decreases.
   - Prevent iron deficiency with good food choices.
   - Iron-rich choices from the meat and alternates group are lean red meat. liver, poultry, beans, peas and lentils. Wholegrain breads and cereals are also good choices for iron.
   - Cook in a cast-iron pan.
   - Did you know that Vitamin C improves iron absorption? To an iron-rich meal like wholegrain cereal or an egg and toast, add a fresh orange or a glass of Vitamin C enriched juice.
   - Did you know that tea decreases iron absorption? Enjoy your tea between your meals, not with them.

3. Fluid Intake
   - Drinking 6-8 cups of fluid (water, juice, milk) a day is an easy way to help your digestion and circulation, and to keep yourself alert!
   - Not drinking enough fluid can lead to fatigue, mental confusion and constipation.

- Thirst is *not* a good indicator of fluid needs. Take a water break between meals and after your brisk walk.
- Drink a glass of water when you first get up in the morning and whenever you are in the bathroom.
- Pills that are needed should be taken with lots of water. Drink ½ cup of water (not just a sip!) per pill.

4. Constipation
   - Fiber is the part of a whole grain product or fruit or vegetable that cannot be digested.
   - Increasing fluid and fiber intake can help prevent and combat constipation.
   - Fiber acts like a natural scrub brush in your system. High fiber breads and cereals are wholewheat bread, wholegrain cereals, foods containing bran and brown rice. All fresh vegetables and fruit contain fiber. Dried fruit is an excellent source.
   - Increase your fiber intake gradually.

Food for energy

If you feel you have less than your normal sparkle, there are many small changes in your habits and routine that can help give you more energy, especially if you couple them with some regular exercise and relaxation.

- Eat a good breakfast in the morning. This will get your metabolism going and give you more energy throughout the day.
- Choose whole grain over white bread. Whole grain has the much needed fiber, iron and B vitamins which work to keep you free of fatigue.
- When choosing fruit, make it fresh rather than canned or juiced. Fresh fruit has fiber and will keep your blood sugar level up longer.
- Cut back on the amount of coffee and tea you drink. Anything in moderation is fine, but more than three cups a day could leave you dehydrated, a little jittery and possibly low on iron in your blood.
- Contrary to popular belief, taking more vitamins or minerals than your body needs doesn't give you extra energy. Check with a doctor, pharmacist or registered dietician or nutritionist before taking vitamin or mineral pills.
- Cut back on the amount of processed foods and fast foods that you eat. Become a reader of labels and avoid foods with added sugar, salt and fat. All those additives just slow you down.

Food for healing

Healthy eating, relaxation and exercise can all help restore harmony and balance to our bodies. Here are some tips to help you, or people you love, to get well again.

When you're temporarily "under the weather" - due to a cold or the flu:

- Drink lots of fluid - 6-8 cups per day. Water, milk and juice are good choices. If appetite is very poor, include more nourishing drinks, such as eggnog, milkshakes, or cocoa.

- Enjoy hearty homemade soup - a soothing meal at these times. A pot of soup is "good medicine" that you, or a friend who is ill, can appreciate. Rely on canned soup only when time and energy are in short supply . . . and then boost its nutrient value by adding extra vegetables, beans, lentils or noodles.

- Include dark green or yellow/orange fruits and vegetables.
- Have oatmeal with wheat germ for breakfast and a slice of whole grain bread or a roll with your lunch-time bowl of soup. Snack on wholegrain crackers, fresh fruit, muffins or a bowl of rice pudding.

As you are getting well again, remember to bring peace of mind to your mealtime. Give yourself credit for the positive steps you are taking. Take time to smell the flowers and taste your food.

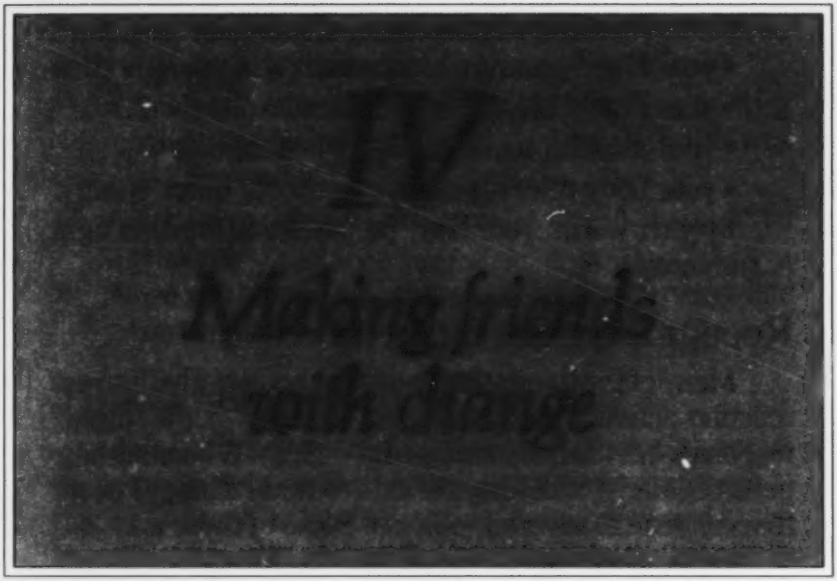
When illness is long term, get the most current, reliable information on food as related to your problem. Ask your doctor for a referral to an outpatient dietitian. The Canadian Diabetes Association, Canadian Cancer Society, B.C. Heart Foundation, and your local health unit can also provide helpful information.

"With years a richer life begins,
The spirit mellows:
Ripe age gives tone to violins,
Wine, and good fellows."

John Townsend Trowbridge

"The purpose of life, after all, is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience."

Eleanor Roosevelt



Understanding Stress

"Stress" refers to a process. It is the process of you interacting with changes in your environment, with whatever coping skills you possess. This process may be short term, for example putting out a brush fire in your back yard, or long term, such as looking after someone you love who is chronically ill. Stress may be a positive experience - winning a lottery - or a negative experience - having an accident.

How does the body respond to stress? When the mind recognizes an event or stimulus (a stressor) as being stressful, a complex series of reactions occur in the body. With short term stress, glands pour out adrenalin and other hormones which set up the "flight" or "fight" response:

- your heart rate increases,
- your blood pressure increases,
- your rate of breathing increases,
- your muscles tense, ready for action,
- your body releases blood glucose for quick energy.

In other words, your body prepares you to either fight or run away.

Recognizing the hazards

Many of the things that cause the body to give a stress reaction actually require neither a "fight" nor a "flight" response. Yet the body reacts nonetheless. When this happens regularly over long periods of time, changes occur that can lead to severe problems. Some of these are:

- changes in sleeping patterns,
- changes in eating habits,
- increased smoking/consumption of alcohol and/or drugs,
- decreased physical activity.

Stress is a normal and even desirable part of being alive. It can have a positive, energizing effect. The trick is to learn the positive ways to cope with stress, because poorly managed stress can create distress. Stress coping methods should be "healthy", which means that our coping methods shouldn't cause even more stress!

Stress is a very personal phenomenon. An event or situation which is a stressor for you isn't necessarily a stressor for the person sitting next to you. The most important thing to consider with stress is not the situation, but how you respond to it. Your first reaction to a stressor, based on years of habit, may not be the best response. You can learn to respond to stress in a healthy manner.

First, you must identify and analyze the way you're presently coping. Ask yourself:

- Are your current responses "healthy"... do they leave you feeling calm and content with the way you responded?
- Are there other, healthier ways in which you could respond?
- Are you blaming someone else for your feelings and behaviour?

Tips to help you cope

As a basis for successful coping with stress, it's essential to practice the other healthy behaviours discussed in this book - such as keeping active, eating well and building a healthy mind and spirit. Once these behaviors are in place, it's much easier to learn specific stress management skills.

There are basically three ways to "manage stress".

1. Remove the stressor.
2. Alter the stressor.
3. Alter your response to the stressor.

Of the three ways, we usually have most control over altering our own response to the stressors. Try some of the following ideas. Find the ones that work best for you - and stick with them.

1. Learn how to relax.

- Practice deep breathing.
- Learn the technique of visualization.
- Try biofeedback.
- Try yoga or stretching.

2. Learn new skills.
   - Organize yourself e.g. learn time management, complete your tasks.
   - Practice behavior rehearsal.
   - Practice positive self-talk.
   - Develop your sense of humor.
   - Practice being more flexible in your outlook.
   - Be assertive, learn to say "no."
   - Express your feelings without being judgmental.
   - Learn to compromise.

3. Develop a positive lifestyle.
   - Exercise regularly.
   - Eat nutritious foods.
   - Don't smoke and do avoid other peoples' smoke (second-hand smoke).
   - Get adequate rest and "quiet time."
   - Use the health care system wisely.
   - Simplify your life.
   - Change your pace.

4. Treat yourself to a break.
   - Listen to music.
   - Have a warm bath.
   - Read an inspirational poem.
   - Recall fond memories.
   - Telephone a friend.

Learning to deal with stress has many benefits. Once you've found the coping techniques that work best for you, you may also find that some, or all, of the following positive changes occur.

- You think more clearly.
- You sleep better.
- You digest your food better.
- Your blood pressure goes down.
- Your blood cholesterol levels are reduced.
- You don't have as many headaches.
- You're no longer depressed.
- You experience increased energy.
- You enjoy a feeling of Wellness!

The wonder of breathing

Relaxed breathing is one of the best tension relievers there is. And the knowledge that this is so puts power in your hands. Whenever you want to relax, take some time to focus on your breathing.

- Begin by sitting comfortably and quietly. Rest your hands on your stomach. Tell yourself you are going to use the next few minutes to relax. Close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose. Visualize sending your breath to your hands. Feel your chest and stomach expanding. Feel your fingers separating.

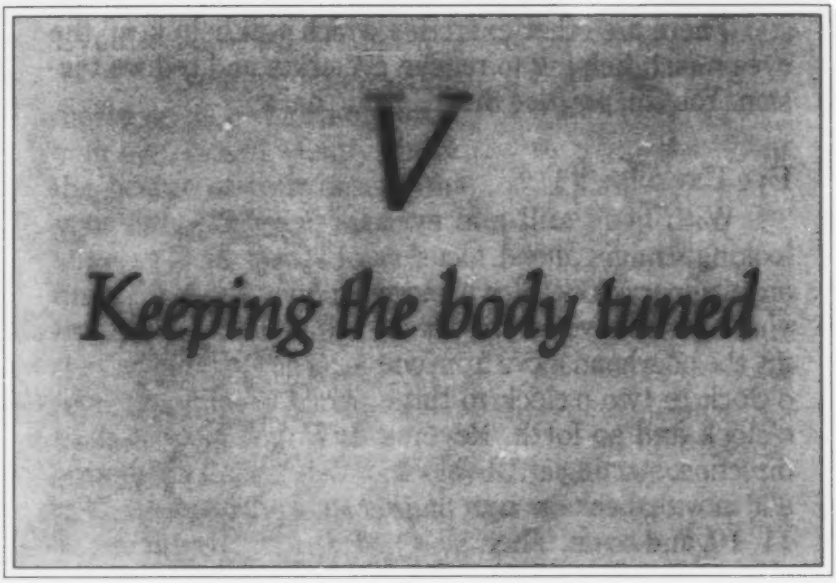
- Breathe out slowly. Feel your chest and stomach deflate. Feel your fingers coming together.

- Repeat this rhythmic cycle two or three times at first. Just sit quietly and concentrate on breathing in and out. Send your thoughts away. If you do get distracted, bring your attention back to breathing. As a variation, you may try saying to yourself "I am" as you breathe in and "relaxed" as you breathe out.

Next time you find yourself in a difficult situation, try this relaxed breathing. What it can do for your peace of mind and sense of well-being is a wonder!

"Every man desires to live long,
but no man would be old."

Jonathan Swift



The eyes have it

Eyestrain and tension may cause visual discomfort. If you find yourself reading, sewing or watching T.V. for an extended period, from time to time give your eyes a rest and try one of the following:

- Blink. A half dozen rapid, easy flutters will relax, lubricate and cleanse your eyes.
- Squeeze your eyes shut, then open them wide. Repeat several times.
- Shift your focus. Occasionally look at a distant object for a few moments.

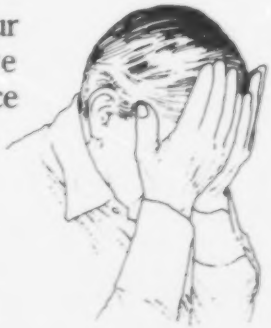
There are other exercises which will help keep the eyes moist, helping to relieve eyestrain and reduce tension. You can practice the following daily.

Eye Exercise #1

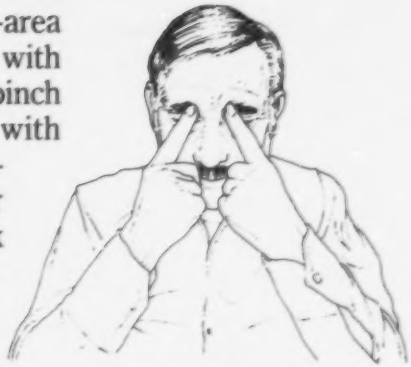
With head still and eyes looking straight ahead, focus on an imaginary clock. Slowly move your eyes as if you were watching the hourhand move from one o'clock to two o'clock to three o'clock and so forth. Reverse direction, starting at 12 o'clock and moving back through 11, 10, and so on. Then close your eyes.

Eye Exercise #2

With palms together, rub your hands. When your hands are warm, close your eyes and place the heels of your palms gently on your cheekbones. The centre of each palm should be directly over each eye without actually touching the eyelid. Release your neck muscles and let your head fall forward into your palms. The warmth from your hands will relax the eyes.



Eye Exercise #3



Give yourself an eye-area massage. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed. Gently pinch the bridge of your nose with your right hand and massage up and down four times. Now rest your index fingers on either side of the bridge of your nose (over the sinuses). Circle back up to the top. With your index fingers (left for left eye, right for right eye), press on the bone around your eye. Exhale as you press.

NOTE: Before starting a massage, wash your hands. If you have a skin infection on your hands, do not do the exercise. And, of course, if you wear glasses, remove them first.

If you have concerns about your vision, consult your family physician, opthalmologist or optometrist. Regular examination is important as you become older, since many vision problems are correctable. Your eye doctor will discuss with you the frequency of your eye examinations.

Treat your feet with care

You may sometimes feel as though you had the weight of the world on your shoulders: think how your feet feel!

Feet give us our most direct means of transportation. After long years of wear and tear, it's small wonder feet may hurt! But with a certain amount of care, foot comfort can be increased and the possibility of foot problems reduced.

So be "foot conscious". Give your feet regular airing, washing and liberation from shoes. Check them regularly. Common problems such as corns, calluses, warts and bunions should be treated early by a foot care specialist. (Podiatry care is covered by the B.C. Medical Services Plan - subject to a small user fee.)

As we age, the skin becomes thinner and more sensitive. For house wear, a cushioned insole or fleecy slippers will increase your foot comfort. If you suffer from diabetes, arthritis, gout or circulatory problems, give your feet special attention. It's essential to avoid shoes that hurt your feet, as a loss of nerve sensation may allow you to walk on an infected sore or ulcer without noticing it.

Choose comfortable shoes.

When you buy new shoes, choose comfort over fashion. A well-designed shoe will conform to the natural outline of the foot and have a deep, roomy toe box. Shoe uppers should be soft and pliable and the material should breathe. Flexible soles are best. If you prefer heels, select broad, low heels and alternate the wearing of heels and flats.

When buying shoes, it is most important that they feel good. Always buy shoes late in the day, when your feet are biggest. Try on both shoes. Can you lift, wiggle, and separate your toes? Take time to break in new shoes, not wearing them longer than two hours initially.

Clip your nails

Cut toenails straight across and never shorter than the end of your toe. Thin and soft nails can be cut with a nail clipper or scissors after a bath. If you have thick or ingrown nails, they are best trimmed by your podiatrist.

Exercise your feet

Regular exercise, particularly walking, will improve the circulation to your legs and feet. Other exercises, practised daily, can also increase the flexibility of your feet.

Foot Exercise #1:

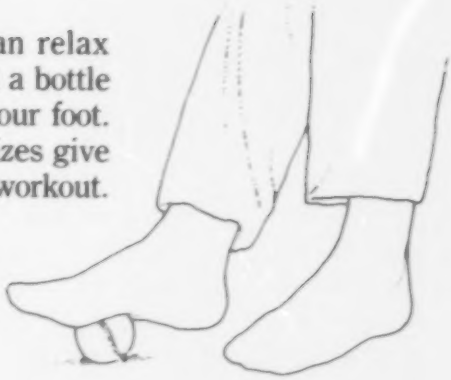
Ankle rotation - While sitting, lift one foot slightly off the floor. Slowly rotate your foot as if drawing a circle with your toes. Repeat 4 times. Reverse direction. Repeat with the other foot.

Foot Exercise #2:

Ankle flexion - While sitting, lift one foot slightly off the floor. Slowly draw your toes toward your body, hold for a second, then push your foot away and point your toes. Repeat 4 times.

Foot Exercise #3:

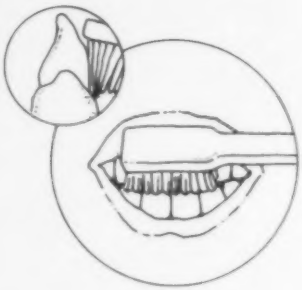
Foot massage can relax your entire body. Roll a bottle or small ball under your foot. Objects of different sizes give your feet an all-round workout.



Teeth need daily care

The problem of plaque

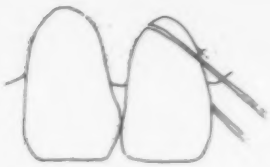
Dental plaque is a sticky film containing harmful bacteria that causes tooth decay and gum (periodontal) disease. It forms on teeth continuously and accumulates at the gumline. Plaque must be removed daily to prevent dental problems.



How you brush your teeth is all-important. Using a soft bristled toothbrush, brush against all the surfaces of your teeth to remove plaque: the outer, inner and chewing surfaces. It's important to place the bristles of the brush at the gumline and vibrate back and forth. DO NOT SCRUB! A systematic pattern should be followed that includes every tooth. It should also include the tongue and palate.

Flossing daily removes the plaque that forms between teeth and in areas that the toothbrush can't reach.

To floss properly, wind about one foot of floss around your middle fingers. Gently insert it between your teeth by moving it back and forth in a see-saw fashion. Do not force the floss between your teeth or press down so hard as to cause bleeding. Move the floss up and down on the side of one tooth, two or three times, until clean. Move the floss to the side of the neighbouring tooth and repeat.



If it's difficult to hold your toothbrush or floss, here are some tried-and-true tips.

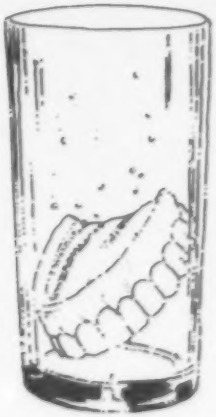
- Push the toothbrush handle into a styrofoam ball to make it easier to use.
- Wrap aluminum foil around the handle to make it larger.
- Put the toothbrush handle into a bicycle grip handle filled with Plaster of Paris or Poly-filla.
- Try a floss holder, available at most pharmacies.

Your dentist or dental hygienist will be able to give you advice on the use of these and other dental aids.

Remember, personal oral cleanliness is the single most important factor in preventing dental diseases, particularly gum disease.

Plaque also forms on dentures and partials and these must be brushed daily to keep your mouth healthy.

- Rinse dentures under warm water after each meal and rinse your mouth with water at the same time.
- Soak dentures at least once a week to remove stain or any calcified plaque (tartar or calculus). Use a commercial product or the following recipes:



To remove light stain:

1 tbsp. bleach
2 tsp. water softener
1 cup warm water

Soak 15 minutes or overnight if needed.

To remove tartar or calculus:

½ tsp. vinegar
1 cup warm water

Soak overnight occasionally.

IMPORTANT: These homemade products are not to be used for dentures with soft liners or metal parts; the metal may corrode. And they're not to be used on teeth in your mouth.

- Remove your dentures overnight and soak them in cool water. If you find you're unable to do this, at least take them out for a few hours each day and soak them. Your gums need a rest!
- Partial plates need to be carefully brushed and rinsed each day. Commercial cleaning products are safe for all partial and complete dentures. The home-made recipes above should not be used for partials with metal parts. If in doubt, consult your dentist or dental hygienist for advice on cleaning them.

Your dentist knows the best and latest techniques for keeping teeth and gums healthy. See your dentist yearly whether you have natural teeth or dentures. The dentist will examine the inside of your mouth, your tongue and lips, and will be on the lookout for any early signs of cancer. Watch these areas yourself (especially if you smoke or chew tobacco) and let your dentist know about any soreness, pain, lumps, or colour changes that you notice.

Play it safe

Safety is an issue at any age. However, aging makes us all more prone to accidental injury. Changes in eyesight and hearing can decrease awareness of hazards, and impaired balance can make us less steady. Medication can also cause dizziness and increase the risk of a fall.

Falls, which are the most common cause of injury, tend to occur in and around the home. Many of them can be prevented. Follow some precautions to remove potential hazards in your home.

- Store heavier items on lower shelves.
- Use a stool or sturdy stepladder. If you need to stand on something, don't use makeshift supports.
- Install stair railings, both inside and outside.
- Keep traffic areas clear. Newspapers, magazines, electric cords and coiled hoses, etc., are easily tripped over.
- Use skid-proof throw rugs.
- Wipe up spills immediately.
- Buff waxed floors well to make them less slippery.
- Install handrails on walls by the toilet and tub.
- Use a rubber mat in your tub or skid-proof it with adhesive strips.

The following checklist will help you assess the physical safety of your home. If you answer 'no' to any question, then this area may have a safety problem for you.

Home Safety

Bathroom

Bathtub

- The tub has a non-slip surface or rubber mat . . . . . Yes ___ No ___
- There is a bath seat or bath board . . Yes ___ No ___
- Access to the bathtub is easy . . . . . Yes ___ No ___
- There is a grab bar or rail on the tub or wall . . . . . Yes ___ No ___
- There is a temperature control device on the tub and shower . . . . . Yes ___ No ___
- The door can be opened easily from the outside if locked . . . . . Yes ___ No ___

Toilet

- There is easy access to the toilet . . . Yes ___ No ___
- There is a raised toilet seat . . . . . Yes ___ No ___
- There is a grab bar or rail on the wall Yes ___ No ___
- The door can be opened easily from the outside if locked . . . . . Yes ___ No ___

Kitchen

- All scatter rugs have been taken off the floor . . . . . Yes ___ No ___
- Food and cooking utensils are all kept below shoulder height . . . . . Yes ___ No ___
- The floor is non-slip . . . . . Yes ___ No ___
- The lighting is bright . . . . . Yes ___ No ___
- There is a fire extinguisher within easy reach . . . . . Yes ___ No ___
- The floor is clear of all obstructions . Yes ___ No ___
- All electrical cords are off the floor . . Yes ___ No ___

- All electrical applicances are "grounded" . . . . . Yes ____ No ____

Bedroom

- All scatter rugs have been removed from the floor . . . . . Yes ____ No ____
- I can switch on a light at my bedside Yes ____ No ____
- All electrical cords are off the floor . . Yes ____ No ____
- I can get in and out of bed easily . . . . Yes ____ No ____
- There is a telephone in the bedroom Yes ____ No ____

Living Room

- The lighting is bright (there are no dark corners) . . . . . Yes ____ No ____
- All scatter rugs have been taken up . Yes ____ No ____
- I can get in and out of chairs easily . . Yes ____ No ____
- The fireplace has a fire guard . . . . . Yes ____ No ____

Hallway and Stairs

- The lighting is bright in the hall and all the way up the stairs . . . . . Yes ____ No ____
- The stair carpet is firm and secure . . Yes ____ No ____
- All scatter rugs have been removed . Yes ____ No ____
- There is a hand rail all the way up the stairs . . . . . Yes ____ No ____

Outside

- Steps and paths are in good repair . . Yes ____ No ____
- Bushes and plants do not overhang the path . . . . . Yes ____ No ____
- The lighting is bright (there are no dark areas) . . . . . Yes ____ No ____

- Garden hoses and tools are never left on stairs or paths . . . . . Yes ____ No ____
- Wet leaves are always removed from stairs and paths . . . . . Yes ____ No ____

If you answered 'no' to any question and you'd like advice concerning the problem, appropriate equipment or the name of a supplier or installer, contact the Community Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist at your local Health Unit.

Other Safety Tips

Wear safe clothes.

- Working in a long housecoat can cause you to trip.
- Choose footwear with non-slip soles.
- Avoid wearing only socks or nylons, or shoes with hard soles which may be slippery on stairs. Higher heels make balance more difficult.

Take your time rising.

- Because of changes in your cardiovascular system or your middle ear, you may not be able to change your position suddenly without getting dizzy. So take your time getting up after you've been sitting. If you've been lying down, sit up slowly and wait a minute or two before getting to your feet.
- Be aware of your body and how you're feeling.
- If you do fall and don't know why, see your doctor.
- Improve your safety by improving your balance. Regular exercise will help you maintain muscle strength and flexibility and reduce the risk of your losing your balance. Certain exercises are especially useful for practising and improving balance. Give these a try:

Balance Exercise #1:

Keeping on your toes

1. Using the back of a chair for support, first rise up on your toes, then come down s-l-o-w-l-y. Up again, and down s-l-o-w-l-y, up and down slowly.
2. Next, come up on your toes, lift one arm up high, then the other arm up high as well. Then, as your arms come down to the side like wings, come down off your toes too.

To improve posture and muscle tone in the legs, make the movement as smooth and graceful as you can. See how good your balance is.

Balance Exercise #2:
The Stork

This is a simple exercise in balance and concentration.

Stand on your right foot with your left knee bent so that the foot is at knee level from the floor. Bend your elbows, and place palms together close to your chest. Then bring your head down to meet your palms, symbolizing a sleeping stork. Balance for a few seconds, keeping perfectly still. Repeat, standing on your left foot with your right knee bent. When balance is secure, this posture should be done with eyes closed and your balance held for a few seconds.

Alcohol, drugs, and aging

Many people can enjoy alcohol all their lives without difficulty. However, as we age, significant changes take place. Some body functions slow down. The liver which breaks down alcohol, drugs, and poisons becomes less efficient. This, coupled with other body changes, means that alcohol has a more pronounced and longer lasting effect.

Alcohol is a mood modifier. Once into the bloodstream it quickly passes into the body tissues, affecting major organs and acting as a depressant. Balance, speech, judgement, and perception become impaired. With age, it takes less alcohol to produce these effects. What may have been a reasonable amount to drink at age 30 is inappropriate at age 60.

Mixing drugs.

Many people take prescription or over-the-counter drugs regularly. If such drugs are taken together or along with alcohol, the results can be unexpected. . . and dangerous. One glass of wine and a single dose of cold medicine, or sleeping pills, can have the impact of three or four drinks. If you're on medication, don't drink or take other drugs unless you first check with your physician or pharmacist.

Alcohol and health risks - choose prevention.

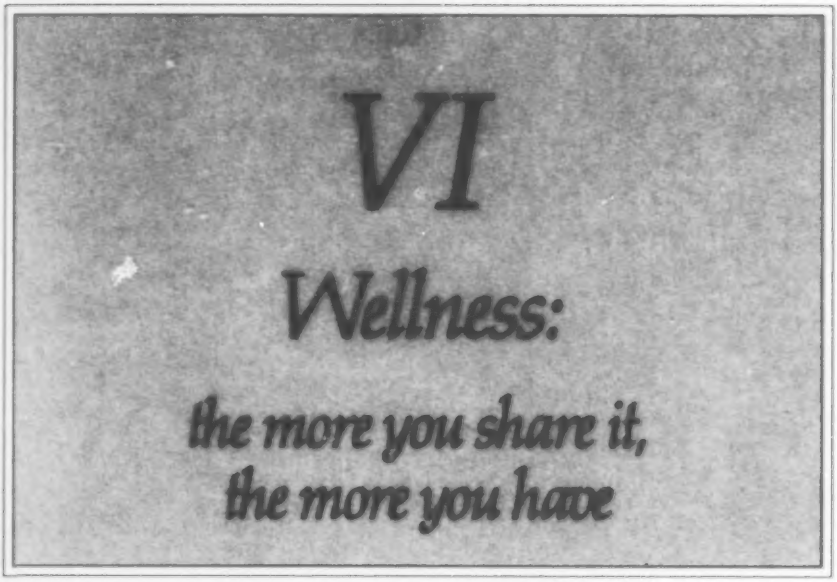
Drinking to relieve depression, disappointment, bereavement, boredom or loneliness may simply cause more problems. Alcohol use may alienate friends and family, and increase the risk of accidents and personal injury. Alcohol can also lead to dependence, addiction, and mental and physical deterioration. There's a choice to be made. Alcohol use greatly increases the risks of serious health problems in the elderly. Non-alcoholic beverages are a healthy alternative.

Treatment

Fortunately, alcohol problems, once recognized, can be treated. Recovery rates for seniors are good. If you're concerned about your own alcohol or drug use, or that of a spouse, family member or friend, help is available. In most areas there are local alcohol and drug outpatient clinics which provide full assessment, counselling, and referral services. Some clinics have special programs for older people. Self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous exist in most communities. Libraries, health units, physicians, and pharmacists are also excellent sources of information.

"Nothing wrong with retirement, as long as it doesn't get in the way of living."

Mark Twain



Wellness comes from more than good food, exercise and positive thinking. It also results from reaching outside one's self and contributing to the community.

Participation stimulates the body, mind and spirit. By making a difference to your community, you build a supportive group of friends and acquaintances, enjoy yourself, feel more energetic and alive. In helping others, you help yourself.

Choosing wellness isn't about giving up things you like to do. It's about choosing better ways to do things so you can enjoy life more...and so you can be an active member of the world in which you live.

Wellness is a very special gift. It's a gift you can *choose* to give yourself. And when you also choose to give it to others, the more you give, the more you'll get back.